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SUBJECT: QUERETARO BOASTS PROSPERITY, COMBATS INTOLERANCE

¶1. Summary. The state of Queretaro located some 160 km northwest of Mexico City boasts a pleasant climate, a rich historical tradition, and a growing economy. The state's governor proudly told visiting Deputy PolCouns that Queretaro typically grew several points above the Mexican national average attributing much of the state's economic success to his efforts to attract new investment in the aeronautic sector. Of course, the state's wealth favors the young and educated, prompting more marginalized segments of the population to migrate to the U.S. in large numbers. Several civil society representatives complained that the state's engrained conservative traditions have fostered intolerance of groups considered out of the mainstream or undesirable. Given Queretaro's conservative reputation, PAN looks to retain its foothold in the state in the upcoming 2009 elections. End Summary.

#### Tapping into the World of Aviation

¶2. Queretaro Governor Francisco Garrido Patron boasted that his state's economy regularly outgrew the rest of Mexico by 1-2 percentage points. He attributed much of the state's success to his efforts to attract new investment, particularly by Canada, in the aeronautic sector. The state had founded a university geared towards training engineers and other specialists who would go into this field. He also believed the creation of an international airport had proven a draw for international firms.

#### Those Who Can't Build Planes Walk North

¶3. Jose Gonzalez Ruiz, a local Deputy to the Queretaro State Congress, spoke of his humble origins as a small time farmer. PAN had effectively made progress into gaining the support of this population segment, which traditionally favors PRI, by building roads, hospitals, and schools in long-neglected communities. Nevertheless, many of these communities remained marginalized, lacking decent job opportunities. Notwithstanding the capital's prosperity, many rural communities had lost upwards of 25 percent of their population to migration to the U.S. Gonzalez Ruiz said that he often found himself attempting to accommodate requests for financial assistance from local residents seeking to bring back the remains of their deceased relatives from the U.S.

#### Fighting Intolerance

¶4. Bernardo Romero, a philosophy teacher at la Universidad Autonoma de Queretaro described the state as a bastion of social and political conservatism. He had been disturbed by an organized attack earlier in the year on emos -- adolescent youth characterized by long straight black hair that they wear off to the side and tight jeans and t-shirts who are fans of punk music and celebrate their emotional expressiveness -- by large numbers of the state's youth. The police mostly watched as the emos came under harsh verbal attacks and some physical abuse. Romero was gratified when capital residents held a relatively large demonstration several days later promoting tolerance. However, he argued against the facile conclusion that the state had overcome its tendency toward intolerance. Instead, he described state

government efforts to "transplant" poor, indigenous street merchants from center city squares to the city's margins. He also maintained that the state's courts favored the rich with the police often constrained from investigating reports of domestic violence when women would decide to withdraw their complaints. According to Romero, the Catholic Church remained one of the most influential institutions in the state and demonstrated a clear bias in favor of PAN given its conservative credentials.

#### Spared Narco-Violence

15. Public Security Secretary Jose Manuel Oganda Perez described how Queretaro's capital which goes by the same name had grown from some 100,000 27 years ago to over one million today. He was generally pleased with law enforcement cooperation among state and municipal police. He cited migrants who often engage in criminal activity upon returning from the U.S. as one of his major concerns. State Attorney General Juan Martin Granados Torres was similarly thankful the state had largely been spared the violence affecting other states remarking there had been only five narco-related killings over the last four years. Some commentators, however, suggested cartel leaders take advantage of Queretaro's peaceful reputation by sending their families there to live in relative obscurity. Both Oganda Perez and Monica Gonzalez Pasillas, a senior representative from the state's Human Rights Commission, spoke of the commission's efforts to provide the police with human rights training.

16. Comment. Queretaro boasts a mild climate, a proud historic tradition dating back to Mexico's war of

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independence, relative tranquillity and an economy that aspires to be modern. However, some commentators worry the capital's clean and prosperous veneer obscures a variety of social and economic ills including intolerance of outsiders and neglect of rural communities. PAN enjoys the support of the Catholic Church and the state's moneyed class suggesting it should fare well in the 2009 elections. Visit Mexico City's Classified Web Site at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/mexicocity> and the North American Partnership Blog at <http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/nap> / GARZA